

that the effects on public morals which we might expect are not produced. Public manners are marked by decency and propriety and the society is not vicious.<sup>1</sup> Things which exist under conventionalization never furnish grounds for an ethical judgment on the group which practices them.

601. Mexican mores. Drunkenness. In Mexico also there were goddesses of erotic passion to whom men and women were consecrated. Courtesans sometimes immolated themselves in the service of the goddess. The notion of virtue in resistance to passion existed, but the goddess, like the Greek Venus, resented any effort to escape her sway and exerted herself to defeat it.<sup>2</sup> The Mayas did not maintain a severe form of sex taboo and they had festivals at which that taboo was entirely suspended.<sup>3</sup> Pederasty also existed under the sanction of religion. Young men in the training house, which was a house of lamentation and penance, were allowed license which was contrary to the current mores of the society, but was an old privilege of soldiers. The dances which they performed daily were obscene. The persons in the dance represented vegetation demons, and the dances helped to get good crops.<sup>4</sup> The notion was not to employ sympathetic magic, but the men, by parallel operations, were supposed to help in the work of fructification which the demons were accomplishing in the plant. Hence a great drama of human cooperation was carried on in the dances. Snakes and frogs were eaten because they were demons of rain and growth. The obscene dances were "not consequences of sex desire, but, on account of their antiquity, they were accepted as a matter of course."<sup>5</sup> At the time of the Spanish conquest

public opinion about the dances was not fixed, but they lasted on through the force of ancient religious tradition. We may be sure that the case of Mexico throws light on the ancient usages of sacral harlotry. In comparatively recent times there were cases in Russia of sex license on the eve of great Christian festivals.<sup>6</sup> There is a parallel also, amongst the Mexicans, in

<sup>1</sup> Dubois, I, 439. <sup>2</sup> Bancroft, *Native Races of the Pacific Coast*, II, 336; III, 377.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, II, 676. \* *Archiv. Antrop.*, XXIX, 153, 158, 164.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, 173. <sup>6</sup> Petri, *Anthropology (russ.)*, 435.